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May 1986

Congo
Post Report

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Preface

An assignment in Brazzaville offers interesting work and a simple, quiet lifestyle. The Congo is developing both economically and politically. The Embassy staff is relatively small; everyone participates in most events and is a member of a closely knit family. Mixed in, as well as aside from work, is the culture of the area, an interesting literary tradition, and the opportunity to get to know new people and languages.

Cover: U.S. Embassy Brazzaville.

This is the official post report prepared by the post. The information contained herein is directed to official U.S. Government employees and their families. Any other information concerning the facts as set forth herein is to be regarded as unofficial information.

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The Host Country

Area, Geography, and Climate

The Congo is located near the Equator in West-Central Africa and extends more than 1,280 kilometers (800 miles) inland from the Alantic Ocean. It is bordered by Gabon, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Zaire, and the Angolan enclave of Cabinda.

The country has four topographical regions:

- A coastal plain extending inland about 64 kilometers (40 miles) to the foothills of the Mayombe Mountains;
- The fertile Niari Valley in the south-central area;
- The Central Bateke Plateau separating the basins of the Ogooue and Congo Rivers; and
- The Congo River Basin in the north, composed of mainly impassable flood plains in the lower portion and dry savanna in the upper portion. Much of the Congo is densely forested.

Humidity is always high, and temperatures average 24°C (75°F) year round. The main rainy season lasts from March to May. Annual rainfall varies from 114 to 203 centimeters (45–80 inches). The main dry season lasts from June through September.

Brazzaville, a city of 500,000 people, lies on the north bank of the Congo River, 315 miles inland from the Atlantic Ocean and 4.25° south of the Equator. The town is fairly level at an altitude of 1,043 feet. A vast, empty savanna of high grasslands and dark green thickets of low trees spread over rolling hills surrounds it. The nearest heavy equatorial forest is more than 100 miles northwest.

Violent rapids make the Congo River unnavigable from Brazzaville to the Atlantic. To the east, the river widens into Stanley Pool—15 miles wide and dotted with many small islands. From Brazzaville inland, the Congo (Zaire) River becomes navigable for 1,000 miles. Goods arriving at the port of Pointe-Noire are shipped by the Congo-Ocean Railway (CFCO) to Brazzaville, which, due to its position above the rapids, has become a critical transit point for commercial and passenger traffic.

The city of Pointe-Noire, slightly smaller than Brazzaville, is the country's major port and railhead for the Congo-Ocean Railway. It is on the Atlantic Ocean, 315 miles southwest of Brazzaville. Pointe-Noire is one of the best ports on the African west coast between Luanda, Angola, and Lagos, Nigeria. Almost all goods moving into and out of the Congo pass through Pointe-Noire.

Population

About two million Congolese reside in over 133,538 square miles of land, an average density of less than seven per square mile. Almost two-thirds of the population live in Brazzaville, Pointe-Noire, and along the connecting rail line. Few people live in the northern sections, which are covered by savanna, swamp, and rain forest.

Outside the main towns, which have attracted people from many areas, the Congolese are divided into small communities. The three principal ethnic groups, among some 75 distinct subdivisions, are the Bacongo, the Bateke, and the M'Bochi.

Some 2 million Bacongo are found on both sides sides of the Congo River, about one-fourth in the Congo, the rest in Zaire. They include the Lari and related groups living in the area around Brazzaville and the Vili, a coastal group predominant in the Pointe-Noire area. The M'Bochi group consists of about 200,000 people inhabiting the northern part of the country, although a considerable number have migrated to Brazzaville.

The 300,000 Bateke, spread over a large area north and northeast of Brazzaville, are the most traditional of the ethnic groups, engaging in hunting and fishing. Animistic worship is still predominant, although most of the urban population is Christian. Virtually all Muslims are non-Congolese and number less the 2%. In rural areas, the Congolese live in small communities having little outside contact. The European community in the Congo numbers about 12,000, principally French nationals (perhaps as many as 10,000), with a number of Eastern Europeans, Cubans, and Soviets.

Public Institutions

The early history of the Congo focuses on three tribal kingdoms—the Kongo, the Loango, and Teke. The Kongo was established in the fourth century A.D. as a highly centralized kingdom and, later, developed close commercial ties with the Portuguese, the first European explorers to the area. With the development of slave trade, the Portuguese turned their attention from the Kongo Kingdom to the Loango. When slave trade was prohibited by European powers in the 1880s, the Loango Kingdom was reduced to many small independent groups. The Teke Kingdom of the interior, which had sold slaves to the Loango Kingdom, dissolved in 1883 with the conclusion of a treaty by the Teke King and Pierre Savorgnan de Brazza. Teke lands, known as Middle Congo, and people came under French protection.

In 1910, Middle Congo became part of French Equatorial Africa, which included Gabon, the Central African Republic, and Chad. During World War II, the Congo became the center for the Free French cause. In 1944 at Brazzaville, General Charles de Gaulle, in calling for African support in the war, hinted at postwar reforms for French Africa. These reforms adopted in the French Constitution of 1946, conferred French citizenship on the inhabitants, decentralized certain powers, and initiated participation by local advisory assemblies in the political life of the overseas territories. More reforms followed with the enactment of the Overseas Reform Act (Loi Cadre) of June 23, 1956, which removed voting inequalities and provided for the creation of governmental organs permitting a measure of self-government. A constitutional referendum, in September 1958, replaced the Federation of French Equatorial Africa with the French Community. Middle Congo, under the name Republic of the Congo, and the three other territories became fully

autonomous members of the French Community. On April 15, 1960, the Congo received its independence from France but retained close, formal bonds with the Community

Under the constitution approved July 8, 1979, political power is concentrated in the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Congolese Labor Party (PCT) and the Council of Ministers (cabinet). The leader of the PCT is also President of the Republic. The President of the Central Committee of the PCT is elected President of the Republic for 5 years by the PCT Congress. The PCT Congress can, however, call for special elections before the end of the 5-year term, as happened in 1979 when Sassou-Nguesso became President of the Central Committee of the PCT, or in 1984 when he was reelected. The presidentially appointed Council of Ministers is the executive organ of the government.

The Constitution provides for a legislature, elected on July 8, 1979, and renewed in September 1984. The Supreme Court is empowered to advise on laws and international agreements and to see that these conform to the constitution. Members of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President.

Each of the Congo's nine regions is under the authority of a political commissioner appointed by the central government.

Arts, Science, and Education

The Congo has had notable success in maintaining the high level of literacy (over 50% and, by accounts, close to 80%) the country inherited from the colonial period. The government devotes about 15% of its operating budget to education. Primary schools dot the country, and primary enrollment in the cities is close to 100%. Enrollment drops off in the countryside, however. The government encourages parents to send their children to school.

Brazzaville is the seat of Marien Ngouabi University which today has about 11,000 students. Since it was originally established as a university for the four states of French Equatorial Africa, a few students still come from other African nations. This institution has faculties of law, medicine, agriculture, education, and arts and science. More than 50% of the faculty is Congolese, and the rest are French, Soviets, and other Europeans.

The Congo is one of the African countries renowned for its modern music and dancing; numerous local bands and night spots exist where one can witness some of the best African bands and singers. Every ethnic group has a proliferation of traditional dance troupes which perform for a variety of celebrations; i.e., marriages, funerals, holidays, etc. The Congolese National Dance Company performs throughout the year at various state (GPRC) functions and travels 2–3 times a year to present shows in other countries.

The Congo is widely known throughout French-speaking Africa as a center for African Francophone literary traditions, and several Congolese authors are highly regarded worldwide. The American Cultural Center welcomes these authors, poets, and playwrights and often provides a forum for lectures and discussions by these personalities. The French Cultural Center has a good-sized auditorium and often presents plays by both Congolese and French theater groups by a range of African, French, and American playwrights.

The Poto-Poto Art School is accessible to the general public throughout the week. Works by Congolese painters are sold and specific paintings can be commissioned. Other painters can be found in their own workshops in the city.

The Congo does not currently produce much traditional woodwork, but some statues and masks, though of dubious "antique" authenticity, can be found in the interior of the country. Handicrafts, too, are fairly uncommon. Traditional utility baskets used to transport fish or manioc are strikingly unique, as are the pygmies' handwoven, natural-colored floor mats. Traditional pottery, found in one region of the country, makes for lovely decoration in a modern setting.

Commerce and Industry

The People's Republic of the Congo faces numerous problems arising from its underdeveloped economic infrastructure. However, petroleum production has stimulated increasing commercial and industrial activity. Small-farm agriculture is based on cultivation of manioc (cassava), peanuts, bananas, rice, coffee, and cocoa. The Congo also has impressive reserves of high-quality tropical hardwoods.

A signatory to the Lome Convention, the Congo conducts most of its external trade with members of the European Community, particularly with France. Due to increasing purchases of Congolese petroleum, the U.S. became the Congo's leading overall trading partner in 1983 and still is. The Congo is also a member of the UDEAC (Union Douaniere et Economique de l'Afrique Centrale), composed of the former members of French Equatorial Africa and Equatorial Guinea, and the CEEAC (Communaute Economique des Estats de l'Afrique Centrale).

Transportation

Automobiles

You will need a car, as privately owned vehicles are the only means of transportation in the Congo. New and used European cars may be purchased duty-free locally, but prices are high compared to the U.S. and Europe. Four-wheel-drive vehicles with high ground clearance are much more practical for the roads outside the city. Personnel assigned to Brazzaville are authorized purchase and shipment of foreign-made vehicles. Most popular makes are Toyota, Land Rover, Peugeot, Renault, Volkswagen, Fiat, Mazda, and Datsun. Maintenance facilities for these vehicles are available but are expensive and not always reliable. Bring a supply of frequently used spare parts (oil, air, and gas filters; spark plugs; fan belts; spare ties; etc.) including a good set of tools and compatible nuts and bolts. Gasoline is below average U.S. quality and unsatisfactory for high-compression engines; premium gasoline is not available.

Driving is on the right. French traffic rules prevail; the vehicle on the right always has the right-of-way. Local police use motorcycles. Since main roads are crowded with pedestrians, motorbikes, and speeding taxis, driving can be dangerous, and local third-party liability insurance is required. Insurance costs are calculated on the basis of European horsepower, and for an average American car, insurance is about $150 per year for third-party coverage.

Restrictions are not levied on the use, purchase, or sale of automobiles here. All American Embassy Foreign Service personnel may import cars duty free from the U.S., France, Germany, or anywhere, and sell them before departure. If a car is sold to someone without diplomatic privileges, the purchaser must pay taxes which vary according to the country of manufacture. An International Driving Permit, accompanied by U.S. license, is required. This permit is available from most AAA offices for a small fee.

Local

Local buses are not used by Europeans and Americans because of overcrowding and unsafe driving. The local taxi service is adequate and prices are reasonable. One-way fare to almost anywhere in the city averages CFA500 or the equivalent of U.S.$1.25.

Regional

Sabena, Air Afrique, Union des Transport Aeriens (UTA), TAP, and Aeroflot fly to Brazzaville from Europe; Air Afrique, UTA, Air Algerie, Air Ethiopia, Angola Air, and Air Gabon from African countries. Lina Congo is used for within-country trips, and has daily flights to Pointe-Noire; other destinations are serviced less frequently. The Brazzaville airport, Maya-Maya, is 6 kilometers from downtown.

Large boats with "modest" accommodations make river trips possible on the Congo and Oubangui Rivers to Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic. It is a distance of about 600 miles and takes 11 days upriver and 7 days down. River travel, however, is unpredictable due to water levels and is often difficult to arrange.

The People's Republic of the Congo has several areas where, for a short distance, all-weather roads exist. A paved road extends from Brazzaville to Kinkala, an 85 km distance. This road continues unpaved to Pointe-Noire and is impossible to travel without four-wheel-drive vehicles, particularly during the rainy season when the road is virtually nonexistent. A second paved road goes north from Brazzaville to Owando (500 km), and will eventually be completed to Ouesso.

The 315-mile Congo-Ocean Railway (Chemin de Fer Congo-Ocean) connects Brazzaville with Pointe-Noire and the sea with two 12-hour daily trains. Because of frequent derailments and track reparations, long delays are not uncommon.

Diplomatic personnel are currently required to inform the Foreign Ministry of any travel outside of Brazzaville at least 15 days in advance. The Congolese Government, however, rarely hinders such travel.

Communications

Telephone and Telegraph

Local telephone, telegraph, cable, and wireless communications are adequate. A good knowledge of French is helpful. Night letter/cable rates to the U.S. are about $1.60 per word; satellite and direct-dial telephone calls average $15 the first 3 minutes and $3.75 for each additional minute (depending on the exchange rate). Calls go through rapidly and connections are clear. A 3-minute, direct-dial call to Pointe-Noire averages about $6 to $10.

Mail and Pouch

Embassy Brazzaville receives one air pouch weekly from the Department; one outgoing unclassified pouch is sent every Friday. APO facilities are available through Embassy Kinshasa and mail departs and arrives at least twice weekly. The address for international mail is:

Full Name
American Embassy
B.P. 1015, Brazzaville
People's Republic of the Congo

APO address is:

Full Name
American Embassy Brazzaville
APO New York 09662-0006

Pouch address is:

Full Name
Brazzaville
Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

All personal packages must be sent by APO mail. Letter mail may be sent either by pouch or APO; APO is faster.

Radio and TV

Both Radio Brazzaville and Radio Kinshasa broadcast in French and local languages about 20 hours daily. Programs are not as clear or varied as those broadcast in the U.S. and Europe. Most personnel prefer to have a good shortwave receiver (from 540kc to 50mc). A Zenith Transoceanic or equivalent set is satisfactory for picking up BBC, VOA, AFRTS, and European broadcasts.

TV is broadcast nightly from 6 pm to 11 pm and all day Saturdays and Sundays. Live broadcasts are amateurish, and "canned" material from France is not always interesting. Some U.S. sitcoms are shown, dubbed in French. Two channels, Brazzaville and Kinshasa, broadcast on the Secam (color) system. U.S. TV's cannot be adapted to the Secam system; therefore, it is advised that personnel purchase TV's with multi-systems, including Secam. The cost of a TV in Congo is exorbitant; e.g., a black-and-white set can cost over $500 and a color set over $1,000. It is highly recommended that home video equipment (TV and recorder/viewer) and a good supply of video tapes be brought to post. Beta Max I, II, III format systems are the most commonly used in the American community, and the Embassy Club has a library with over 150 titles for rent for a modest fee.

Newspapers, Magazines, and Technical Journals

French newspapers, magazines, and journals are available in Brazzaville, at high prices. The European edition of the *International Herald Tribune* and certain English-language magazines are also available. All papers and periodicals are 2-3 days old. Copies of the European edition of *Time* and *Newsweek* are sold locally. Many staff members subscribe to the *IHT*, *Newsweek*, and *Time* (European editions), which arrive several days after publication.

Health and Medicine

Medical Facilities

Two regional medical officers are based in Kinshasa; one is responsible for official U.S. personnel living in Brazzaville, and comes on an average of twice monthly and is contacted directly by phone in the case of any problems or emergencies.

The Embassy has a small but adequate Health Unit staffed by a part-time registered nurse.

The local hospitals and clinics are not up to U.S. standards. In the case of an illness not treatable by the Embassy nurse, RMO, or resident French doctor, evacuation to South Africa or Europe would be authorized.

Kinshasa has a few facilities for obstetric and gynecological patients, but most women in the European and diplomatic communities travel to Europe or the U.S. for medical attention and to give birth.

A number of highly qualified French doctors in Brazzaville who are with the French Medical Assistance program treat private patients at offices near the Embassy.

A reputable dentist practices in Brazzaville and another in Kinshasa, Zaire, but all preventive dental work should be done prior to arriving at post.

Preventive Measures

Malaria is endemic to the Congo region. Aralen and other antimalaria pills **must** be taken regularly. Begin taking malaria pills 2 weeks before arrival at post and continue for 6 weeks after departure.

Proof of smallpox vaccination is no longer required in the Congo, but typhoid and yellow fever immunizations are still required by the State Department. Although tetanus and polio immunizations should be completed prior to arrival, they are given at the Embassy Health Unit. Also available, and highly recommended, are rabies vaccines and gamma globulin injections. Up-to-date cholera stamps are recommended for all travelers to the Congo in order to minimize problems with quarantine officials when entering the country. These cholera stamps are required for travel to Zaire.

Diarrheal diseases, skin infections, hepatitis, and intestinal parasites are also common. General respiratory ailments take longer to cure than in more temperate climates. The heat and humidity are often the most unpleasant medical aspects of life at post. Fluoride tablets are recommended for children's teeth.

The climate aggravates respiratory, sinus, and low blood pressure problems. Supplementary vitamins in the daily diet may be helpful. An active physical exercise routine and social interests are important for maintaining good health and high morale and spirits.

Brazzaville has a water purification plant; however, the questionable quality of the water, water distribution facilities, and climate dictate that drinking water be boiled and filtered before ingestion. Vegetables and fruits should be washed thoroughly. If these items are to be eaten raw, outer skins should be removed. In preparing lettuce for salads, wash each leaf at least twice in cooled, boiled water and soak in a potassium permanganate or chlorine solution.

Snakes are indigenous to the Congo and, though most are harmless, proper precautions should be observed by all family members.

American Embassy

Brazzaville

Brazzaville, the capital of the People's Republic of the Congo, is located on the north back of the Congo River, directly across from Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire.

Its colonial history begins in September 1881 when Makoto Ilo, King of the Teke, ceded parcels of his land to Savorgnan de Brazza, an Italian-born explorer in the service of his adopted France. On October 3, 1880, Brazza signed a second accord which gave France claim to much of the land now part of Brazzaville. By 1902, Brazzaville had taken the place of Libreville as the capital of the French Congo and by 1910 it became the seat of the Governor General of French Equatorial Africa. Its regional importance continued to grow with completion of the Congo-Ocean railroad in 1934. During World War II, General De Gaulle made Brazzaville the center of the French resistance movement.

Brazzaville has become overcrowded in recent years, as more and more people are leaving the rural areas to seek employment. As a result, the city has a rather rundown look about it. Roads dotted by potholes and piles of garbage on the sides are a common sight. Many of the old colonial buildings and shopping arcades are in desperate need of paint and repairs. A number of buildings have recently been completed and many more are under construction.

The vegetation is lush and many streets are bordered by mango, palm, and flame trees which blossom in November (Brazzaville's springtime).

The majority of the city's Congolese population live in two large sections:

- Poto-Poto ("Mud" in Lingala, one of the more prominent local languages) has 150,000 inhabitants, almost entirely members of the M'Bochi tribe from northern Congo.
- The Bacongo area, where most of the Congolese from the south of the country live.

Countries that have diplomatic missions in the city include: Algeria, East Germany, West Germany, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, China, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, France, Gabon, Great Britain, Guinea, Italy, Nigeria, Romania, Russia, Yugoslavia, and Zaire. The following countries have Honorary Consuls: Holland, Portugal, Spain, Sweeden, and Switzerland, Many international organizations are also represented, such as: Central African Regional Development Bank, U.N.D.P., European Economic Community, African Regional Headquarters for the World Health Organization, UNICEF, and African Union of Post and Telecommunications. A number of other countries are represented by their embassies in Kinshasa.

Although a few Europeans living in the Congo speak English, French is essential for employees and their dependents for social and daily activities. Fewer than 75 Americans reside in the Congo. The flow of business representatives traveling to Brazzaville has risen steadily in recent years, especially with the arrival in Pointe-Noire of Amoco and Conoco.

The Post and Its Administration

The American Embassy is located on Avenue Amilcar Cabral, one of the main streets in Brazzaville. The building, formerly the Belgian Bank of Africa, is an imposing structure designed by the French architect Eyrelle who also designed the Saint Anne Cathedral and the Case de Gaulle (residence of the French Ambassador).

The Chancery, close to business and shopping centers, has a view of the Congo River and Kinshasa. Embassy telephone numbers are: 81.20.70, 81.26.24, 81.23.57, or 81.39.52. Working hours are from 7:30 am to 12:30 pm and 1:30 pm to 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday.

USIS is located on Avenue Foch near the Embassy and across the street from the Hotel de Ville. The Cultural Center offers English classes, movies, ABC nightly news broadcasts (2 weeks late), occasional lectures, and art shows.

An AID liaison officer was assigned to Brazzaville in 1983. AID's assistance to the Congo has focused primarily on management training and on the development of the agriculture and health sectors. The agricultural project at Mossendjo, in the Niari region, is being implemented by the private volunteer organization, CARE-Congo, in cooperation with the Congolese Government.

The Defense Attache Office was established in December 1982.

Housing

Temporary Quarters

The Embassy makes every effort to have permanent quarters ready for occupancy on arrival, so temporary quarters are rarely used. The Meridien Hotel, Cosmos-Frantel, and the M'Bamou Palace (a PLM hotel) are the most frequently used and are the best in Brazzaville. They compare to some of the moderately priced hotels in the Washington, D.C., area. A single air-conditioned room with bath costs about $60, excluding meals and service charges.

Permanent Housing

All quarters in Brazzaville are government-owned or -leased. The Ambassador's residence is a large, attractive villa located in town, approximately 5 minutes from the Embassy. The house is furnished, including dishes, silver, and a limited supply of linens. The house has a large living room/reception area, four bedrooms (one is used as a den), a formal dining area, and a terrace overlooking a garden and pool. Most Embassy homes have a combined living and dining area; several bedrooms; a garden; and telephones, though they do not always work.

Furnishings

All quarters are adequately furnished, according to joint regulations. Porch or patio furniture is also supplied. Bring pictures, knick-knacks, vases, ashtrays, flower pots, etc. Only the Ambassador, DCM, and PAO are provided linens, silver, and china. In addition, bring your

own light blankets, clothes hampers, wastebaskets, etc. A Hospitality Kit is available upon your arrival until household effects are received.

Utilities and Equipment

Most Embassy homes are equipped with water reservoirs, water pumps, and generators to alleviate inconveniences caused by occasional shortages of water and electrical power outages.

The post provides one refrigerator, gas stove, washer, dryer, and an upright freezer for each residence. Current is 220v, 50-cycle, AC. Although some small electrical appliances (i.e., hairdryers, electric razors, and kitchen items) can be purchased locally, prices are almost double those in the U.S. Bring such items to post.

Include a good supply of round-pronged conversion (adapter) plugs for U.S. appliances in your household effects. These can also be purchased locally, but at double U.S. prices. Because electrical current is unpredictable and often unstable, 220v regulators for video and audio equipment are highly recommended; also consider a 500w to 1,000w regulator. Though available in the U.S., regulators are readily purchased at more reasonable prices in Europe.

Food

A variety of canned goods, imported mostly from Europe, is available in Brazzaville at much higher prices than in the U.S. Supplies are unreliable, and shopping trips may require several stops. Only canned foods should be brought in quantity; weather and insects take a toll on packaged goods. Orders may be placed with American and European food companies, but transportation costs are high, and delivery takes upwards of 3 months.

Local fresh vegetables and fruits are seasonal, expensive, and limited in both variety and quality. Vegetables include lettuce, potatoes, green beans, carrots, cabbage, beets, cucumbers, onions, spring onions, spinach, squash, radishes, tomatoes, and eggplant. Local fruits include oranges, grapefruit, papaya, pineapple, mangoes, avocados, guavas, bananas, and lemons. Wash unpeeled vegetables and fruits in a solution of potassium permanganate or detergent before eating raw. Imported fruits such as oranges, grapes, apples, and pears, and vegetables such as carrots, endive, cauliflower, and mushrooms are often available in local supermarkets at high prices.

Sterilized long-life milk, whole and nonfat, from France is available. Powered milk from The Netherlands and Denmark is plentiful. Evaporated milk, sweetened condensed milk, and long-life cream are available. Sweet butter and margarine are imported from Europe, as are a variety of excellent cheeses. Eggs and locally made and imported ice cream are also available. All are at least double U.S. prices.

A few French butchers sell high quality meat. Fresh beef, veal, lamb, sausages, and pates are imported. Some fresh pork is imported and some comes from local sources, as does poultry which varies in quality and is expensive. Fresh or smoked hams are unknown except from the imported/pressed varieties. All fresh meats are inspected and safe to eat so long as they are purchased from reputable butchers. Fish from Pointe-Noire arrives regularly and is good, but expensive. Local seafood shops carry sole, bar, capitaine, oysters, shrimp, lobster, and, on occasion, frogs' legs.

Supermarkets carry spaghetti, macaroni, noodles, dried beans, packaged and canned soups, coffee (local and imported), and many standard food items available in the U.S. Local flour of acceptable quality is available in the local markets, as are rice, tomato paste, salt, and sugar. Fresh baked "French" bread and an American-type loaf are available daily.

American favorites that are rare or nonexistent include canned sweet potatoes, canned corn, U.S. ground coffee, canned tomatoes, meats and prepared hams, popcorn, cocktail snacks, nuts for baking (although local peanuts are readily available), as well as holiday needs such as canned pumpkin, cranberry sauce or jelly, fruit pie fillings, and candied fruits. Other specialty items difficult to find are pie crust mixes, brown and confectioners sugars, shortening, corn syrup, molasses, baking powder, American-style mustard, horseradish, soft drink and ice cream mixes, and American chile sauce and powder. You will want to bring your favorite spices, vanilla and extract flavorings, flavored and unflavored gelatin, peanut butter, maraschino cherries, cake decorations, cornmeal, and cornstarch.

Locally produced beer, tonic, soda and soft drinks are available at reasonable cost. A tax-free liquor store here offers good French, Italian, and German wines and beer at prices comparable with Washington.

Cleaning and paper products are available locally at outrageous prices, so a good supply of laundry powders, bleach, hand and dishwashing soaps, window and floor cleaners, paper towels, toilet paper, plastic wrap, plastic bags, and aluminum foil should be included, One may also consider bringing a supply of toiletries; for example, razor blades, deodorant, shampoo, hair conditioner, shaving cream, toothpaste, make-up products, first aid creams (the purchase of a well-stocked, brand-name first aid kit would be ideal), aspirin or other pain relievers, and those items that one may require of prescription drugs during one's tour.

Although crossing the river is time-consuming, expensive, and complicated, a commissary in Kinshasa is open to all mission personnel and their dependents. One can find a good selection of American and South African staples at high prices. (**See** the *Zaire Post Report* for more details.)

Next to the commissary is a large supermarket called "Shopping." The selection of mostly South African and Belgian goods is large. Their freshly baked bread, meats, and household items are particularly outstanding.

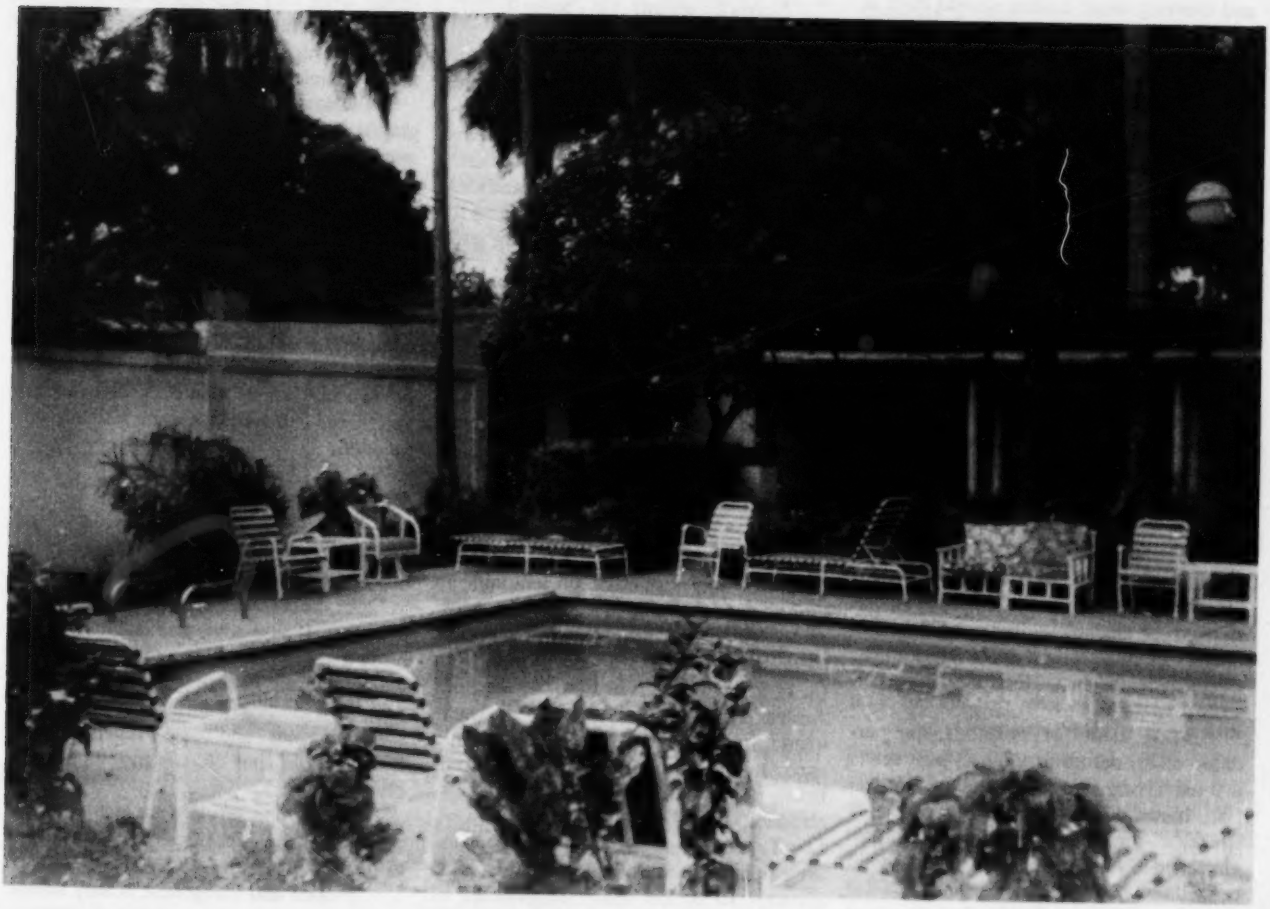
Clothing

Bring clothing similar to that worn in the Washington, D.C. area in summer. Although drycleaning services are available, it is preferable to bring washable clothing. A limited selection of ready-made European clothes is sold at astronomical prices. Bring a complete wardrobe for a 2-year tour unless you can arrange for U.S. catalog orders by APO or plan to shop during your R&R.

Because of possibilities for travel to cold climates, bring enough warm clothing for visits to these areas. Other winter and wool clothing should be stored.

The Tumbu fly is a minor menace. Its larvae penetrate the skin and produce a boil-like lesion. The fly lays its eggs on laundry hung on a line to dry or clothing damp from perspiration that has been discarded during sports events. If eggs deposited on clothing are not destroyed with a hot iron, the larvae in garments worn next to the body will penetrate the skin. All clothing should be well-dried and ironed before wearing.

Men. Light, casual summer clothing is worn year round. Many businessmen in the Congo wear dark, lightweight business suits year round. At the Embassy, lightweight suits are acceptable. One medium-weight suit may also be useful for June and July when temperatures cool. Officers



Top: Train Station, "Africa Unchained."
Bottom: Villa Washington pool.

usually need about six lightweight suits for a 2-year tour. Two dark blue, black, or gray suits for evening functions are recommended. For infrequent formal gatherings, one lightweight black-tie outfit or tux is adequate. Bring plenty of light-colored and lightweight shirts, undergarments, socks, and shoes. French tailored suits are expensive compared to similar American products. Sports shirts are worn during off-duty hours. Lightweight raincoats and umbrellas are extremely useful during the rainy season. Cottons are, by far, the most comfortable; pure nylon or dacron items don't allow adequate ventilation and are too warm. A combination of cotton/dacron is comfortable. Shoes should be lightweight and comfortable. Expensive leathers and suedes are discouraged because of dampness and wet surface conditions outside the office.

Women. Casual cotton, washable dresses, skirts, and blouses are worn daytime year round. Long or short sundresses and street dresses can be worn for cocktail and evening wear. Ladies should have at least one or two long dresses for more formal occasions. Although French and African women often wear more formal dresses of lame, taffeta, and lace, American women find washable cottons, rayon, dark silks, and linens far more suitable and practical for formal occasions. Clothes deteriorate rapidly with frequent washing and ironing. In selecting a wardrobe, emphasis should be placed on variety and comfort as well as elegance and current styles.

Short- and long-sleeved cotton dresses, blouses, and skirts, or slacks and a sweater or stole are very useful during evenings in the cooler seasons.

Coats are not normally needed, but a lightweight raincoat or rainjacket and umbrella are recommended for the rainy seasons.

Clothing that "breathes" (i.e., loose-fitting cottons) is highly recommended for the warmer, more humid seasons. Short-sleeved or sleeveless lightweight cotton dresses or blouses and skirts are a must. Because of the heat stockings are rarely worn.

Bring plenty of shoes. If you purchase shoes before arriving at post select a loose-fitting pair; feet tend to swell in hot, humid climates. Readily available European-made footwear rarely fits Americans and is very expensive. Sandals, with or without heels, are worn daily and for informal gatherings. Due to dampness and occasionally wet walking surfaces, expensive leather or suede footwear are not recommended.

Local prices for undergarments or swim and beach wear are quite high. Bring a good supply of these items to post.

Children. A large supply of clothing for children is necessary. Many play areas are unpaved and often muddy; frequent laundering is required. A school-aged girl requires cotton dresses, skirts, blouses, shorts, playsuits, and T-shirts. School-aged boys wear ordinary shorts, shirts, and T-shirts. Bring a good supply of casual cotton clothing for younger children. Also bring plenty of swimwear; it wears out quickly. A large supply of socks and undergarments is also necessary. Tailors are relatively inexpensive, but fabric is limited and costly, you might want to bring some material with you.

Most necessities are available, but prices are high for often inferior products. Shoes, particularly sneakers and sandals, should be brought to post; local choices are extremely limited.

Needs for infants, i.e., paper diapers, formulas, clothing, and other toiletry articles should also be brought to post. Baby foods are available locally, at two to three times U.S. prices, so it might be advisable to bring large quantities of these items. Some infant medications can be obtained through the Embassy Health Unit and local pharmacies, but stock varies and items for infants may not be available. Bring good supplies of all infant needs to post.

Toys, games, books, educational materials, writing papers, crayons, etc., are available locally. However, variety is limited, reading materials and board games are published only in French, and prices are double or triple U.S. prices.

Supplies and Services

Supplies

Toiletries and cosmetics are available in limited quantities and at high prices. Most personnel either bring these items with them or have them shipped to post from the U.S. or Europe. The Embassy supplies Aralen, a malaria-suppressant to all Americans. Small supplies of other commonly used, nonprescription drugs are stocked. Bring items such as Band-Aids, Q-Tips, children's medications, and vitamins. Local pharmacies are well supplied and drug prices are reasonable, but it is often difficult to obtain exact equivalents of U.S. products.

Duty-free American cigarettes can be purchased locally for about $6 per carton. European and local brand cigarettes are also available; pipe tobacco is difficult to obtain.

Send in your air freight an initial supply of laundry and face soaps, insecticides, paper and plastic products, mosquito repellants (include Off soft towelettes) and anti-irritant products. Include wax and shelf paper, foil, paper napkins, facial and toilet tissues, and miscellaneous cleaning equipment. Most of these are available locally, but at higher than U.S. prices.

Purchase kitchen and cooking equipment, linens, and china prior to arrival. Although most of these items can be purchased locally, they are also expensive.

A good supply of children's toys and games should be brought along with entertainment supplies and specialty items.
Men's traditional haircuts cost $6–$8.

Drycleaning services are available in Brazzaville.

Automobile repair services for European-made cars are adequate; however, repair work can take weeks to complete due to shortage of skilled labor. Automobile repair service for American-made vehicles is inadequate.

Radios, televisions, stereo/phonographs, and video equipment spare parts, as well as spare parts for American-made vehicles are ordered from the U.S. or Europe.

Because of the humidity and intensity of the sun in the Tropics, a good supply of sun products is also recommended. Bring sunblock for small children and adequate supplies of suntan lotions and sunburn relief medications or sprays to post for all family members. Hats and/or sun visors and sunglasses are also recommended.

Basic Services

Excellent dressmakers are available and are quite reasonably priced. Often, if requested to do so, they will come directly to your home for necessary fitting and tailoring. If you sew, you might want to bring a sewing machine and various lightweight fabrics in order to make some of your own clothes. Fabrics, sewing accessories, notions, and basic French patterns are available, but choice and supply are often limited.

Shoe repair services are available and work is reasonable; prices vary according to quality of repair.

French and Congolese beauty salons and barbershops are available at comparable Washington or European prices. A styled haircut cost between $15 and $20.

Domestic Help

Domestic applicants are readily available at post. Quality varies greatly and most need basic training and close supervision. Generally, servants are honest and ready to perform any variety of household tasks. Most families employ one domestic and, when necessary, a gardener.

Household servants normally work an 8-hour day during hours that best suit your needs. If special receptions or dinners are being held, household staff will work, provided they receive advance notice and overtime pay. Babysitters and "nannies" are more difficult to find. Servants working after 6 pm expect transportation home.

Salaries range from $75 to $150 per month for a full-time household employee. Each employer pays 12.5% of the servant's total quarterly salary into a government-operated social security system. Employers often voluntarily pay for hospital and medical care for servants for injuries or illnesses related to work. The Embassy supplies 24-hour residential guardian services.

Religious Activities

Roman Catholicism is predominant. Several Roman Catholic churches are located throughout Brazzaville. Services are generally in French. A protestant service in English is held once a month at the Evangelical Mission. An interdenominational service is held the other Sundays at 9:30 am at the World Health Organization chapel. Brazzaville also has an active Salvation Army and the Swedish Mission occasionally sponsors religious services in English. American missionaries are active in Impfondo (on the northern border of Congo).

Education

Dependent Education

At Post. Brazzaville has no English-language school. Government-run primary and secondary schools are staffed by French and African teachers. Instruction is entirely in French; attendance is predominantly African. Curricula are modeled after the French school system, but books are adapted to the African scene. Tuition is free and children provide their own books and school supplies which cost about $60 annually. Schools are badly overcrowded, physically inadequate, and poorly equipped. School hours are long and sports are not included; some physical training is held each week.

A pre-school, "Ecole Maternelle Ste Anne," directed by English-speaking Canadian sister operates in Brazzaville. It takes non-Congolese children ages of 3½ to 5 and runs five mornings a week from 7:30 am to noon. The cost is moderate.

The French school (St. Exupery) is a part of the French education system in France and is supported by the French Government. Most of its teachers are from France, and the curriculum is identical to that of any school in France. The Congolese Government does not allow attendance by Congolese children. Enrollment is predominantly French; other foreigners attend on a space-available basis. Even up until the day school starts, a non-French child may be excluded based on a shortage of classroom space. Enroll as early as possible so if classes fill up your children will be closer to the top of the waiting list. If you want your children enrolled, notify the Embassy as soon as possible. Required books and supplies are available locally. If coming from Europe, you may be able to purchase these items in France. The school covers education from elementary through the baccalaureate. Any non-French-speaking child entering the second and higher grade levels must pass an entrance exam and is normally placed back one grade in order to become more familiar with lessons taught in the French language. School fees, excluding books and supplies, are approximately 200,000 CFA ($550) per year.

Tutors are difficult to find. A professional from school will cost about CFA 4,000 ($10–$15) per hour. You may hire less expensive tutors, but they may not be adequate for a child trying to keep up with lessons in a French school.

Another possibility is boarding children at the American school of Kinshasa (commuting to and from home on weekends). Boarding facilities are run by missionary groups. Children younger than age 11 or 12 are generally not accepted in boarding facilities. Some parents substitute or enhance children's education with the Calvert system. More information on this system may be obtained in Washington.

Away From Post. Personnel wishing to send their children to an overseas school should contact the Department to obtain information pertaining to English-language boarding schools abroad.

Special Educational Opportunities

Marien Ngouabi University is the only local institution of higher learning, and schools are not available for teaching art or music. Instructors are sometimes available to teach piano, art, ballet, and typing (French keyboard). Tennis and horseback riding are taught individually at local sports clubs.

Post Orientation Program

The post conducts an active French-language training program, open to all employees and their dependents. Instruction follows the FSI language-training program. Private arrangements can be made for Lingala lessons.

All new arrivals at post are met at the airport, introduced to the Ambassador and other staff members, and briefed informally on local conditions, practices, and customs.

Recreation and Social Life

Sports

Tennis instruction is available. Soccer is very popular for all ages here and is quite an enjoyable and active way to spend an afternoon. Currently, however, few spectator sports are available other than soccer. Sports provide one of the main means of recreation at post. Facilities include a tennis club with lighted courts, a riding club, a rugby team, a nine-hole golf course (with sand greens), and the Club Nautique (for boating and water sports). Sports equipment and clothing are limited mostly to tennis and swimming. If you enjoy outdoor sports, bring equipment that you may need, i.e., picnic utensils, golf equipment, waterskis, and sports attire. All equipment available locally is expensive. Photographic equipment and facilities are also available at double U.S. prices. The following clubs are open to paying memberships:

Tennis Club. Facilities include seven clay courts with lights and a large bar. Balls are supplied free.

Club Hippique. Riding club with facilities for instruction as well as advanced riding. Availability of lessons depends on enough people expressing an interest and the availability of an experienced instructor. The club has a bar, swimming pool, and two tennis courts.

Brazzaville Golf Club. The club has a well kept, nine-hole course (which by clever use of tees converts into an 18-hole course) with sand greens. It is on the grounds of the regional headquarters of the World Health Organization (WHO), 20 minutes from Brazzaville, and has a spectacular view of the Congo River and the rapids. Many tournaments are organized during the course of the year.

Villa Washington. This small, U.S. Government-owned club, open to all Americans, features a swimming pool, a volleyball net, a video room, and a small snackbar.

Aero Club. Located at Maya-Maya Airport. This club has limited facilities and aircraft for licensed pilots only. Flying lessons are available at approximately double U.S. instruction fees. A bar, swimming pool, and three tennis courts are available for use by members.

PLM, Meridien, Cosmos, and Olympic Palace Hotels all offer monthly subscriptions for their tennis courts and pools. Subscription fees are high by U.S. standards.

Touring and Outdoor Activities

Touring is extremely limited due to governmental travel restrictions, poor quality of roads, and lack of accommodations. Trips can be made to Foulakari Falls, Lac Bleu, and the Pine Forest—all within a 2-to 4-hour drive from Brazzaville—with a four-wheel-drive vehicle. These areas are well worth the trip, but not recommended for small children. Travel by road to two or three other scenic spots is possible, provided you have a four-wheel-drive vehicle and the necessary camping equipment. All camping and picnicking equipment should be brought to post; local supplies are scarce and very expensive.

Excellent deep-sea fishing is available off the coast, at Pointe-Noire. Again, all equipment should be brought to post if you wish to partake of this type of recreation. Firearms may not be imported to the Congo.

The Congo River with its islands and beaches provides many opportunities for motorboating, waterskiing, fishing, picnicking, and swimming. The current is swift and dangerous; therefore it is imperative to wear a life jacket when participating in water sports. The Embassy has an 18-foot motorboat for use on weekends.

Brazzaville is extremely isolated in the sense that resort areas are great distances from the capital city, and travel is time-consuming and expensive. Pointe-Noire, the Congo's seaport, may be reached from Brazzaville in 20 hours by road with four-wheel-drive vehicle during the dry season, a full day by train, or 1 hour by plane (daily departures). Although Point-Noire offers limited night life and cultural opportunities, it has good beaches for swimming and sunbathing, good fishing, several excellent seafood restaurants, and comfortable hotels. First-class train travel costs CFA 13,130 (around $30–$35, depending on exchange rate). Round-trip air travel costs CFA 52,000 (approximately $100).

Due to poor road conditions, travel on leave, except to Pointe-Noire, is usually by air. Big game parks and resorts in the Central African Republic, Zaire, Rwanda, South Africa, and Kenya offer variety in vacation spots, but high costs of air travel on the African continent limit their appeal. The R&R point designated for Brazzaville is New York.

Just outside Brazzaville are the buildings and staff residences of the World Health Organization's African Regional Headquarters—a pleasant place to walk. Other spots of interest are the famous Stanley Pool, nearby rapids of the Congo River, Foulakari Falls (a 2–4-hour drive from town), and the colorful bluffs on the Congo River known as the "Cliffs of Dover."

Entertainment

One downtown movie theater provides public entertainment; daily performances are held at 6:15 and 9 pm with a Sunday Matinee starting at 2:30 pm. Films are always in French; some American films, dubbed in French, are shown.

Brazzaville has a growing number of good but expensive restaurants. Full meals, either lunch or dinner, average about $20. European-style discotheques and several African night clubs are available; some of the African clubs offer orchestras and outdoor dancing.

Social Activities

Among Americans. The small American community is active and creative in organizing social events such as pool and beach parties, dart tournaments, volleyball games, dances, and barbecues.

International Contacts. Employees may be offered the opportunity to join local branches of the Lions Club or Rotary. Members are prominent government and business leaders. All Embassy members have ample opportunities for meeting Congolese and Europeans socially, but knowledge of French is essential. Inability to converse in French severely restricts social life within this predominantly French-speaking community.

Official Functions

Nature of Functions

The Ambassador and all other Embassy officers have regular representational responsibilities. In addition, the Ambassador hosts an annual Fourth of July reception for Embassy personnel. Many large diplomatic receptions and informal dinners are held during the year within the European diplomatic community. Formal occasions are few; most in-house entertainment is relaxed and informal.

Standards of Social Conduct

Officers make normal diplomatic calls and should bring an adequate supply of calling cards—500 should be ample.

Special Information

Personnel should bring 12 passport-sized photographs for each family member. An international drivers license and a U.S. license are also necessary. It is also recommended that employees ship their full allowance of consumable items to post.

When sending delicate, fragile items, keep in mind that Brazzaville has no professional packers and all household effects must be packed by the owner.

Notes For Travelers

Getting to the Post

Because of complicated visa, "laissez-passer," immigration, and customs procedures, do not plan to arrive via Kinshasa. Brazzaville is serviced by several direct flights from Paris. Both Air Afrique and UTA have regularly scheduled flights. Incoming personnel will be met upon arrival by Embassy personnel. If unexpected or delayed arrival occurs, notify the Embassy and the Marine Guard will notify the proper person. You should have a valid visa for the Congo before departure from the U.S.; airport visas are extremely difficult to obtain in Brazzaville. If a 1-year visa cannot be obtained, one that will cover the time of your arrival is a must; a 1-year visa can be obtained after arrival.

The Congolese Embassy in Washington will begin issuing diplomatic and official visas in early 1986.

Ship unaccompanied baggage (both air and surface freight), as well as household goods and consumables, as soon as possible after receipt of travel orders. All household effects to Brazzaville from Washington go by ship to Antwerp, then by air to Brazzaville. Outside of Washington, you may wish to send household effects and consumables either to Antwerp for air shipment to Brazzaville or straight to Pointe-Noire. The address for surface/air shipments of personal and household effects is:

The American Ambassador
(Employee Initials)
c/o American Embassy, Brazzaville
People's Republic of the Congo
via Maya-Maya Airport
via Antwerp, Belgium

The owner's initials should also be on all containers. Liftvans are commonly used. Automobiles need not be boxed, but they should be insured against all possible damage. Normal shipping time from the U.S. to Pointe-Noire is 2 to 3 months, with an additional month from Pointe-Noire to Brazzaville by rail. Route all air shipments to Brazzaville and not, under any circumstances, to Kinshasa. Do not ship effects via Matadi, Zaire, since they will be forwarded to Kinshasa.

Customs, Duties, and Passage

Customs and Duties

All Embassy staff members have free-entry privileges for their household effects, automobiles, and reasonable amounts of goods and liquors if they are shipped with your effects and received within 6 months of your arrival. Free-entry privileges on a regular basis are accorded only to the Ambassador and family.

Passage

Yellow-fever immunizations and up-to-date cholera stamps are required by local authorities prior to arrival at post, especially if you are coming from a country currently reporting cholera cases. A valid visa for the People's Republic of the Congo is required before entry will be granted.

Currency, Banking, and Weights and Measures

The official currency unit is the CFA (Communaute Financiere Africaine) franc. The exchange rate fluctuates. In May 1985 the rate was 480 CFA = US$1. With a fluctuating exchange rate, the cost of living allowance also varies; it is now 20%. The metric system of weights and measures is used.

Taxes, Exchange, and Sale of Property

U.S. personnel at post do not pay direct local taxes. No restrictions exist on the amount of cash or checks that may be brought into the People's Republic of the Congo or on the use of dollars, but their exportation must comply with Congolese exchange control regulations.

Travelers checks can usually be cashed at local banks. Personal checks can be cashed after identity is established or endorsement is made by someone known to the bank. Brazzaville has several banks and local checking accounts may be easily established.

Recommended Reading

These titles are provided as a general indication of the material published on this country. The Department of State does not endorse unofficial publications.

American University. *Area Handbook for the People's Republic of the Congo (Congo-Brazzaville)*. U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C., 1971.

Forboth, Peter: *The River Congo*.

Gauze, Rene. *The Politics of Congo-Brazzaville*. Hoover Institution Press: Stanford, 1973.

Surveys of African Economics: Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Congo (Brazzaville) and Gabon. IMF: Washington, D.C., 1968.

Wagnet, Jean-Michael. *Politiques de la Republique du Congo*. Librarie Generale du Droit et de Jurisprudence: Paris, 1963.

Local Holidays

New Year's Day	January 1
Labor Day	May 1
Readjustment of the Revolution	July 31
Three Glorious Days	August 13, 14, 15
All Soul's Day	November 1
Children's Day	December 25
Proclamation of the Republic	December 31